



# Faith Adventures for Children Together



*Committed to URC Children Together:  
enabling everyone to grow more like Jesus  
together in the home, church and beyond.*

For guidance on the purpose of the resource and how to use it as a launch pad for your engagement with children and families, please use this link:  
<https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/FACT-how-to-sheet.pdf>

## Jeremiah 17: 7-8 Like a tree with roots

**Theme:** Trust in God and grow healthy roots

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### Introduction: What would be helpful to know in my planning?

This is our last session looking at the theme of ‘Growing’. Today we will be exploring how strong roots can give us the stable platform for growth, using the passage from Jeremiah “They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water.”

Roots are, usually, unseen but it’s through the roots that plants get many of the nutrients they need to grow. It tends to be true that the bigger the plant, the larger the root system. A strong root system gives stability and strength allowing plants and trees to grow to their full potential (as long as they remain cared for and protected when necessary).

The Tap Root is the large central root from which all the other roots spread laterally. The tap root is thick and sturdy. Your group will be looking to see if the tap root in their tree of faith is God – and will be exploring where, or who our roots are (e.g. family, friends, church, wider URC connections, etc.), and what nutrients we get from these roots to feed our faith.

When you need to transplant something (perhaps moving it to a bigger pot to allow it to grow more – similar to leaving junior school to move to secondary school) you usually need to transplant the roots, too. If a plant’s system is wide and healthy then being transplanted isn’t a problem – it will continue to grow in its new surroundings. Is it the same for us?



Sometimes, to help something new grow, we take a cutting from a healthy plant and either plant that somewhere new or graft it on to an existing plant. What might that say about our faith?

Be aware that there might be people in your group who are fearful about being 'transplanted' – going to a new school, moving house, etc. Don't minimise these concerns but affirm that there will always be support and help – that you, their friends, the church community and God are part of their root system.

## Together

How do I help my group to come together and get started with the theme?

### Gathering prayer

#### Jesus, our friend

(use alternate index fingers to point and tap the middle of opposite palms)

#### Be with us today

(two hands, palms up in front of you, move up and down twice)

#### As we share together,

(two hands, palms up in front of you, move one forward and one back and alternate twice)

#### Pray together,

(hands together, palm against palm, as though praying)

#### Play together,

(hands to each side, palms up, make two small circles outwards)

#### And get to know you better,

(point up with one hand)

#### As children together in your family

(one hand out, palm down in front of you, move it sideways and up in three 'steps' as though to indicate children of three different heights)

#### AMEN

(Two thumbs up, and bring fists slowly together to meet in front of you)

OR

**Thank you, God, for bringing us together today.**

**Help us to grow closer to you in all we do.**

**Help us to speak and to listen, to learn and to grow together,**

**Adventuring together with you wherever we may go.**

**Amen**

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### Game – You can't move me!

When we are strongly rooted in the things that help our faith to grow, things outside us become less powerful to throw us off balance. If we trust in God, God blesses us and gives us strength. It may not be suitable to play games about physically knocking people off balance (health and safety, obviously!) but it can be fun to try to throw people off balance metaphorically by making them laugh. In pairs, have one person trying to keep a straight face whilst reciting the alphabet or a favourite nursery rhyme and the other trying to make them laugh. Who can remain straight-faced the longest?

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## Alternative game – Statues

The passage talks about being strongly rooted. This game is about being still and steadfast. One person stands at one end of the room with their back to the rest of the group. The group members try to creep up closer and closer while the first person's back is turned. Periodically, the first person turns round suddenly and looks at the rest of the group and the group have to freeze and be as still as statues. If they wobble or move or make a sound, and the first person spots them, they are out. The first person then turns their back on the group again and everyone creeps a little further forward.

## Experience

For this story we recommend using the Contemporary English Bible

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah+17%3A+7-8+&version=CEV>

### Where can I find the story online?

Under fives: Jeremiah 17: 7-8 Steve Unicomb

<https://youtu.be/Swt25kP2RSA?si=j6ayx9wgYQWPkrDY>

Over fives: <https://youtube.com/shorts/-c9NUBOZiU0?si=5M2oFtQU2sCFbrTI>

### Songs to support the story

Under fives: I can trust God <https://youtu.be/t9NhSFi-a50?si=ExYfArSPeMtrgtKo>

Five to elevens: Be like a tree: <https://youtu.be/MeUBnWrh280?si=pzNQzCEKJbfrJmBY>

## Explore

Ideas and activities to explore this week's Bible passage together

### A new way to explore the passage

The words in the passage this week paint a picture that can help us understand how our faith, our relationship with God, grows and helps us grow. As we explore this passage, we can create our own picture or image. How you do this is up to you and the group to decide. Perhaps you will draw it together on a big sheet of paper, perhaps a flipchart page or piece of wallpaper lining paper. Perhaps you will paint or collage it or a combination of these.

Start by drawing a seed about 2/3rds of the way down the page. This represents the first time we began to be aware of God – maybe someone told us about God, maybe we sensed God's presence, maybe we read something that made us think.... The first thing the seed develops is a tap root, going down in search of nutrients and to provide stability as we grow. Draw the tap root. This is our trust in God.

Now the root system will begin to spread as the tree which represents our lives begins to grow. As you develop the drawing together, discuss what are the roots that give our lives stability and also nutrients to help us grow? What do our friends and family provide for us, our schools, our church, our groups? Maybe experiences and memories? Add roots to the image, writing on them the things that they could represent. Try to let the group members come up with the ideas rather than guiding them too much. As they add in the roots, the leader could draw the tree and some branches.

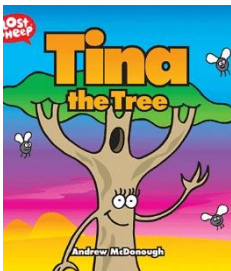
What about the blessings that the passage mentions? These are the good gifts God gives us – not money or fame, but things like love, confidence, comfort and encouragement in tough times. Add those things as leaves on the tree.



Finally the passage talks about bearing fruit. When we trust in God and have a strong and healthy relationship with God, we start to behave in ways that show that relationship to everyone around us in the way we live our lives. What ways might those be? What sort of things might we choose to do and say and think if we're following God/Jesus? Add fruit to your tree and label these with the 'fruit' that we might grow if we're rooted in God. Think about the way that the fruit benefit others – maybe even sowing a seed of faith in them!

## Modern parables

Jesus used stories to help people understand the things of God, even though they weren't necessarily overtly Christian stories. Lots of children's books can be used in a similar way as a conversation starter on the week's theme. Examples are shared here but you may think of others too.



'Tina the Tree' by Andrew McDonagh, Lost Sheep  
<https://www.lostsheep.com.au/stories/tina-the-tree/> (Website and download of story)

[https://youtu.be/j9\\_aGBiKXQ?si=ypAxBIvu2rtaBNk](https://youtu.be/j9_aGBiKXQ?si=ypAxBIvu2rtaBNk) Andrew McDonagh tells the story

### Talking together: How might we talk about the story together?

- I wonder what plant creates the biggest roots?
- I wonder if you have to be near a stream to grow?
- Who or what helps you grow a healthy faith? Who are your roots?
- I wonder how God blesses people who trust God?
- How do we keep our roots healthy?
- Which do you think is the most important root for our faith?

### Wondering together: suggested questions to use during activities

- I wonder, if you were a fruit tree, what fruit tree you'd like to be and why?
- I wonder who helps you grow in God?

### What's in the box (for under fives)

Use the special box or bag and sing "what's in the box/bag? What's in the box/bag? Let's see, let's see, what's in the box/bag" (to the tune of The Farmer's in the Dell). You could tap the top of the box twice after the word 'box'. Pull out the things one by one and then let the children play with them, talking about the theme or the story in simple terms.

This week's box could include:

- A carrot – This is called a tap root, it is very big and strong, God is our tap root that helps us to be strong in faith.
- A plant with roots – Look at the plant it has lots of roots all helping it to grow. I wonder what helps us to grow with God?
- Food – Roots feed the plant, just like food gives us energy.
- A heart in the centre of a circle – God is like a central root where our faith grows.
- Fruit – Plants produce fruit or flowers when they are growing well. I wonder what our fruit may be?
- A set of play people to act out the story or random shapes/bits you can move around to make pictures from the story as you tell it (eg stones, felt, twigs etc)

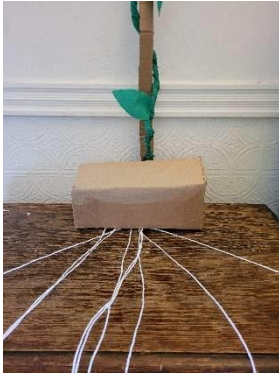


## Express

Praying together: how can you involve the children actively in prayer?

### Creative Prayer – Roots

This prayer builds on the vine prayers used throughout this series – see previous weeks for other parts of this creative prayer resource.



- Attach string or wool to the base of the vine's pot using tape.
- Spread them out around the vine to represent roots.
- Ask your group to write the names of other group members on small squares of paper, with a punched hole in them. (Younger children may need help, or people could work in pairs if some find writing more challenging).
- Thread the names onto the string roots, praying for relationships within the group and for relationships with God to grow.
- You could also write names of other members of the church congregation to attach to the roots.

*Remember that the paper vine can be used as the basis for creative prayers throughout the 'Growing' series. Different elements can be added each week to build your prayer vine.*

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### Spoken prayer

Creator God,

Help us to have healthy roots so that our faith can grow.

Help us to bear tasty fruit and beautiful blossoms.

Let others see how beautiful you have made us.

Amen

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### Responding together

Here are some suggested crafts and activities, and there is a colouring sheet at the end of this resource. You could also use small play toys and/or have a basket of resources available so children can choose their own way to respond. <https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/FACT-how-to-sheet.pdf>

With an online group, plan whether to deliver any resources in advance or how you will encourage them to use what they've got to hand in their response.

However you do it, it is good for the adults to engage in the response too, and all chat together.



## Tree of Life



*You will need:*

- Paper plate
- Scissors
- Tissue paper – green and red
- Wool
- Coloured pipe cleaners
- A hole punch

*What you do:*

Cut out the centre of the plate, leaving the raised edge. This is where your tree will grow. Using a hole punch, create five holes along one side of the plate, this is for the roots. On the opposite side, punch nine holes, each about an inch apart for your branches.

With a dark-coloured pipe cleaner, create the trunk for your tree. Start by threading it through one hole at the bottom, and one hole at the top. (If you want you can twist two together to create a thicker trunk). Twist the ends up to secure it.

Next, you will need four strands of wool, each about 1 metre long, similar in colour to your pipe cleaner.

Lace one end through a bottom hole and tie a knot to the plate to secure the wool. Slowly wrap the wool around the pipe cleaner, working your way upwards. You do not need to cover the entire pipe cleaner. About halfway up, lace the wool through a top hole. Then wrap it around the pipe cleaner a few times. Lace the wool to a different top hole and tie it off. You've now added branches to your tree of life! Repeat this process with the three remaining pieces of yarn.

Tear off small pieces tissue paper and crumple them up. Use a little bit of glue to attach the tissue paper pieces to the top of your paper plate. Now you have a blooming tree of life! Use the wondering questions to help the children think about what their roots might be (what gives them a strong foundation and feeds their relationship with God?), their blessings (what good things come from that relationship?) and the fruit they grow (how do they live which shows everyone that they are friends of Jesus?) .

## Roots experiment

There are two types of root systems that a plant might grow. One is the tap root system – a strong first root sinks vertically, deep into the ground then branches off to form secondary and tertiary roots. Many trees have a tap root, as do many of our root vegetables – with vegetables we actually eat the tap root which has stored up lots of goodness for the plant. The other root system is the fibrous root system where lots of thinner roots grow outwards from the stem, a few going downwards but mostly spreading out like a mat. Many trees start with a tap root but then develop a fibrous system which actually spreads out as wide as the tree is tall! As you do this experiment, think about how our tap root is our faith and trust in God, and our fibrous root system is all the things that help us grow in faith.

*You will need:*

- Paper towels



- Water
- Rice
- Food colouring
- Clear cups

### *What you do:*

Roll 3 paper towels into tubes and tape the middle of each one.

Make one tube into a fibrous root by cutting the bottom into strips. Turn your second tube into a “no roots” tube by cutting the bottom off. Keep the last tube whole to be your taproot.

Place your taproot and fibrous root tubes into two separate cups. Gently pour rice around their bases so the tubes stand up.

Fill the third cup with rice and gently press your “no root” tube slightly into the top of the rice.

Fill the empty cup with water and add some food colouring. Stir with a spoon or fork.

Pour some of the coloured water into each of the cups. Try to keep the water from touching the tubes as you pour it. We are going to see how the roots draw nutrients from the soil.

Watch your paper towel roots for five minutes and watch what happens.

### Extra

Why not design and create your own paper towel root and add it to a fourth cup. Let your imagination run wild and create a root design you think would help a plant. What features will your root have?

What happened to each of your paper towel roots after five minutes? What was the first thing you noticed about your paper towel roots?

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## Everyday with Jesus – Walking the Way

What could we do this week to carry on what we've learned? Maybe members of the group could come up with a suggestion. If not, get them to choose from these two challenges:

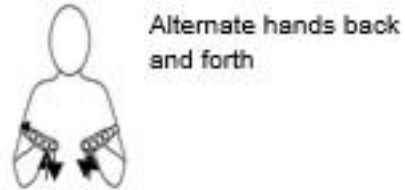
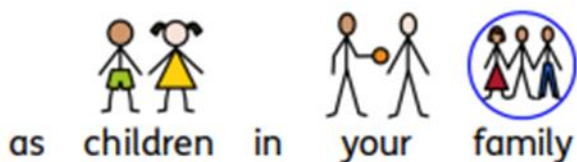
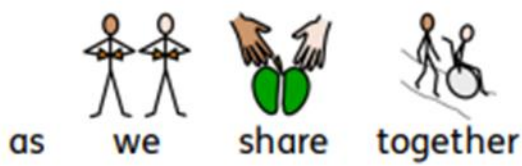
- There are lots of ways that we can develop strong roots when we trust in God. Give those roots a boost this week by doing something that you find helpful such as reading something in your Bible, talking to someone, praying.
  - There are lots of ways that our faith helps us grow fruit; fruit of kindness and patience and love for example. How can you show the world that your faith has strong roots? Perhaps you could do something kind for someone else or raise awareness about an issue that's important to you such as poverty or food banks or homelessness.
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We hope you enjoyed exploring the story from **Jeremiah** with us.

Please let us know what you liked or what you would find useful by emailing [lorrainewebb@urc.org.uk](mailto:lorrainewebb@urc.org.uk)

Why not have a look at next week's resource on **Saints**



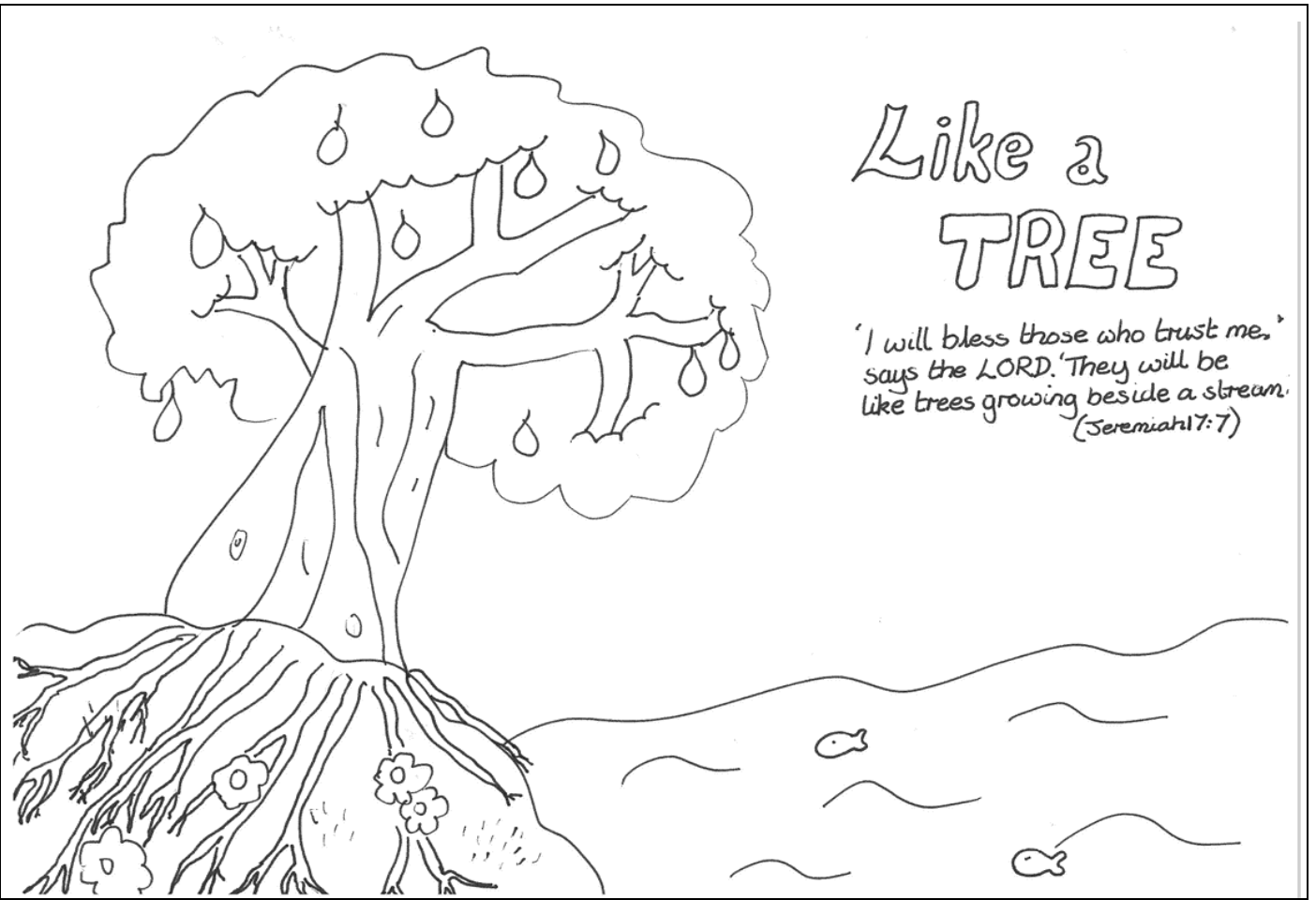






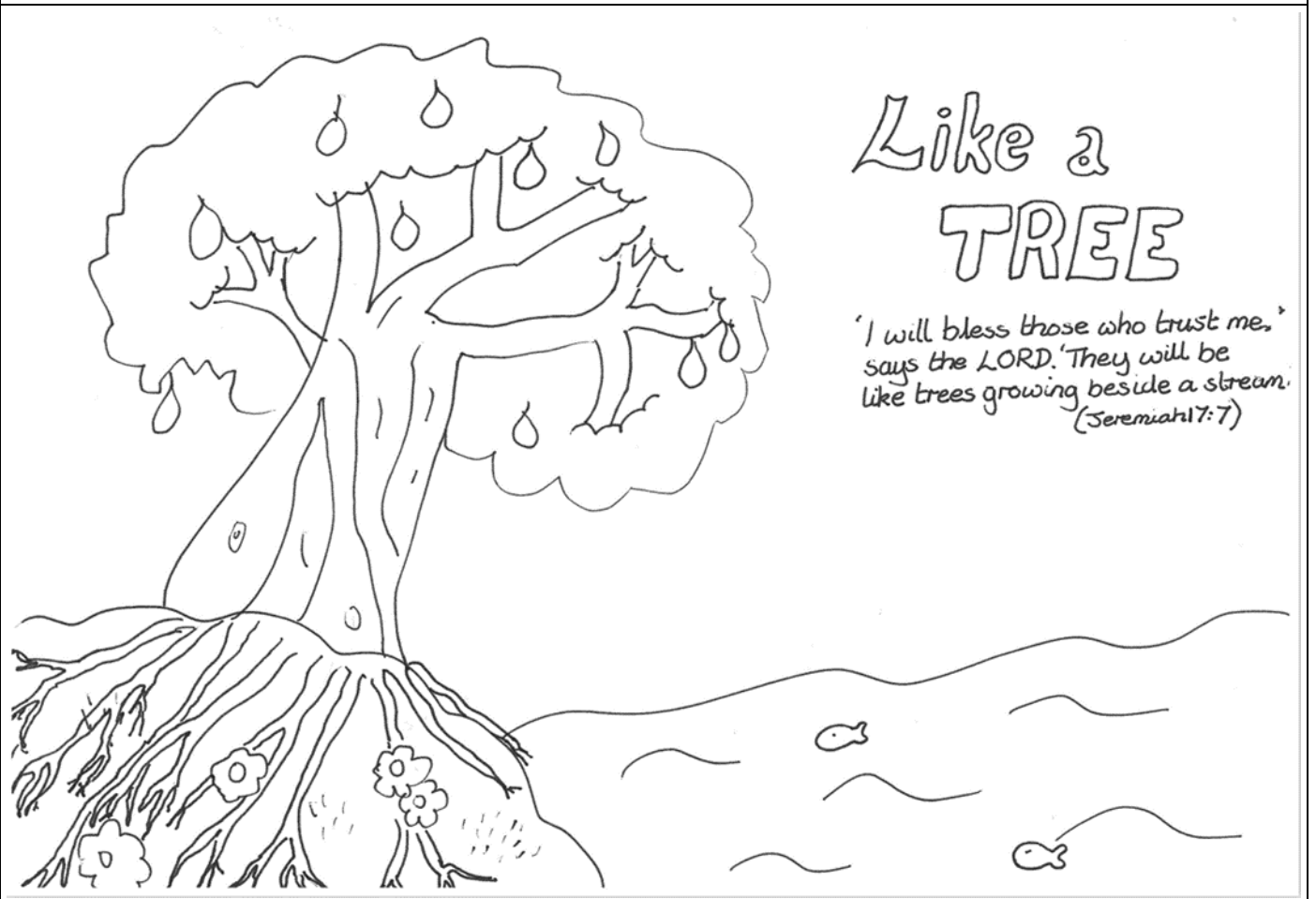
# Like a TREE

'I will bless those who trust me,'  
says the LORD. 'They will be  
like trees growing beside a stream.'  
(Jeremiah 17:7)



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